

Law and Order in the World and the Basic Ethics of Buddhism

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Buddhism is a system of religious thinking. That is, it is a sensible way of living in this world in order to make a success of one's life here and hereafter. It was given to the world of humans by a young human named Siddhartha Gautama, more than two thousand five hundred years ago. His religion teaches us how to obtain, in the first instance, the highest happiness in life of three score years and ten, more or less, while living in this world. We are to acquire it without bringing unhappiness upon any other through death or destruction caused by our self-constructed strong likes and dislikes.

This peace on earth and goodwill among men are to be achieved through our love and kindness, without causing any harm to those around us, human or animal. Every one of us loves our lives. We love to live and enjoy happiness in our living. For no reason whatsoever, religious, ethnic or political do we humans have a right to fight and kill any other in any part of the world to achieve our own goals. The word we use for this attitude is *maitri* or true spirit of friendliness to and with everybody other than ourselves, with no other sectarian alliances whatsoever. Taking after this idea, we say that according to Buddhism, the next savior of the world who is going to appear in the far distant future is going to be named Maitreya, i.e. a symbol of Love or Friendliness.

To achieve this goal, our Master the Buddha has laid down a very basic system of five fundamental ethics which can hold true to mankind all the time, any where and everywhere. The very first of these deals with respect for life of all living things, both human and animal, whether large

or small. Every one has a right to live, without any threat or danger to its life.

Today, twenty-five centuries after our Buddha, it has come to be called, as far as humans are concerned, a Fundamental Human Right. We as Buddhists call it a right of every living thing. Threats of killing and destruction, spat across globally through devilish mouths from any part of the world, disturbs peace on earth and goodwill among men.

The second in this list of ethics is the right of humans to possess and own what they have legitimately earned to make their lives happy and comfortable. No one has a right to dispossess others of their belongings. This is viewed as amounting to dispossessing others of their right to comfort and happiness. The possessions may be individual and personal or public and collective. Global invasions through sheer brute force come in this category. Concepts like neighborhood watch area, introduced by civilized communities in the world, and globally accepted, belong to this category.

In the interests of a consolidated and harmonious human society come the organized and regulated gender relationships of the male and female members of a society. Where marriage or wedlock was considered the valid and solid basis of the continuance of the human community, propriety of sex relationships between the genders was considered a must within social ethics of Buddhism. There was little or no room for pre-marital or extra-marital relations within Buddhist thinking. They were frowned upon and viewed with distrust and utter contempt. Legality of marriage and the consequent sense of responsibility in the production of children went a long way in building up social solidarity and social harmony. The need for such modern criminal practices like abortion was anticipated and eliminated. They were looked upon like air pollution through badly used motor cars.

The fourth in this series is honesty or transparency in all social transactions of humans, both the high ups and the lower downs. No human, neither man or woman, shall cheat or deceive any other with regard to the truth or falsehood of whatever has been said or done. Dishonesty will invariably put out of action all

social processes. People are driven to such lines of action because of their interest in selfish personal profit and gain. This calls upon the magnanimity and the nobility of character of the human in society not to put out of action the wheels of social efficiency in its smooth running.

The final ethic in this series endeavors to safeguard the sanity of human judgement by protecting it against being overpowered and shattered by the human's proneness to drugs and alcohol. Whatever is being said today in the commercial world of alcohol production about the sensible use of different types of alcoholic drinks, there is now a consensus about the disastrous effects of drunkenness. This is the point of stress in Buddhism about the maddening use of drugs and alcohol. To this is also added the corrosive effect of these on the human body. Today there is the world-wide endeavor to arrest this disaster, at least in the area of motor car driving in the strict utilization of the breathalyzer by the police all over in the civilized and sensible world.

Finally, Buddhism maintains that if law and order can be brought about in the world via this ethical regulation, there would hardly or never be the need to overthrow governments in order to restore moral order in any state.